

## Olivia Burlingame Gombri

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**Subject:** FW: Prospective US Ambassador to Venezuela Makes Unsubstantiated Claims

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Gombri [<mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 05, 2010 12:43 PM  
**To:** 'Olivia Burlingame Gombri'  
**Subject:** Prospective US Ambassador to Venezuela Makes Unsubstantiated Claims

Dear friends and colleagues,

Please find below a communiqué issued by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela after the written statements delivered by Mr. Larry Palmer to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee as part of the confirmation process to serve as US Ambassador to Caracas. These statements are now public and have received wide media coverage. A full transcript of the statements can be found at <http://lugar.senate.gov/issues/foreign/lac/venezuela/>

Sincerely, Olivia

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**Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**

**Ministry of People's Power for Foreign Affairs**

**Statement**

### **Venezuelan Government Evaluates Actions for Palmer's Unacceptable Statements**

The government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has become aware of the serious declarations given by the Ambassador-Designate of the United States of America to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Larry Leon Palmer, before the U.S. Congress.



The Bolivarian Government considers that the content of those statements sets a precedent of meddling and interventionism from someone that has not even arrived in Venezuelan territory yet.

The revolutionary government of Venezuela is evaluating the consequences of those unacceptable declarations, which are emphatically rejected, and has demanded explanations from the government of the United States of America before making a definite statement on this issue.

*Caracas, August 4, 2010.*

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**República Bolivariana de Venezuela**

**Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores**

**Comunicado**

**Gobierno venezolano evalúa acciones ante declaraciones  
inaceptables de Palmer**

El gobierno de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela tuvo conocimiento de las graves declaraciones que el embajador designado por el gobierno de Estados Unidos para representarlo en Caracas, Larry Leon Palmer, rindió



ante el Congreso de ese país.

El Gobierno Bolivariano considera que el contenido de estas declaraciones constituye un serio precedente de injerencia e intervencionismo para alguien que ni siquiera ha pisado el territorio venezolano.

El gobierno revolucionario de Venezuela se encuentra evaluando las consecuencias de esta declaración inaceptable, la cual rechaza enérgicamente en todas sus partes, y ha solicitado explicaciones al gobierno de Estados Unidos antes de tomar una decisión definitiva sobre este asunto.

*Caracas, 4 de agosto de 2010*

Olivia Burlingame Goumbri  
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## Olivia Burlingame Gombri

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**Subject:** FW: Election Bulletin: Voting in Venezuela Proceeds Normally and Peacefully

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Gombri [<mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org>]

**Sent:** Sunday, September 26, 2010 4:09 PM

**To:** 'Olivia Burlingame Gombri'

**Subject:** Election Bulletin: Voting in Venezuela Proceeds Normally and Peacefully

Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in this update on Venezuela's legislative elections happening today.

Best, Olivia





## **Election Bulletin: Voting in Venezuela Proceeds Normally and Peacefully**

Voting in Venezuela's September 26 legislative elections has proceeded in peace and normalcy, with 100 percent of the country's 12,000 polling stations opened to voters by noon.

After casting her ballot this morning, Sandra Oblitas, a member of the National Electoral Council (CNE), commented: "The process is taking place in absolute normalcy. The polling stations were set up early in the morning, and with the arrival of poll workers and officials from the CNE we reached 99 percent of polling places open. As such, the electoral process is fully functional and is proceeding in absolute normalcy," she said, according to a press release on the CNE's website.

In the early afternoon, the CNE reported to the press that 100 percent of the polling places in Venezuela were open to voters, and any reported instances of problems were minor and were being dealt with immediately. "No incident has presented itself that has been difficult to handle. They have been few and of minor effect," said Tibusay Lucena, president of the CNE, who was quoted in an article published by the Venezuelan News Agency (AVN).

Turnout has been steady, with some estimating that it may reach 70 percent of the 17.7 million Venezuelans registered to vote. President Hugo Chavez cast his ballot in the early afternoon, celebrating the day of democratic expression. "Everyone who comes to vote knows that their vote will be respected," he said after voting.

This election is Venezuela's fifteenth since 1998. Over 6,400 candidates from 186 political parties are vying for all 165 seats in Venezuela's unicameral legislature, the National Assembly. Of those seats, 52 are chosen based on affiliation with a political party (party-line votes) and in accordance with the principle of proportional representation. The remaining 110 seats are nominal, or single votes, and there are three seats for representatives of Venezuela's indigenous communities.

Some 2,500 national observers, 150 international observers and 60 political guests are deployed around Venezuela observing the elections. Polls are scheduled to close at 6 p.m., though they will remain open as long as voters are waiting to cast their ballots.

For more information on Venezuela's legislative elections, please read our Fact Sheet (<http://venezuela-us.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/09-17-2010-FS-Elections2.pdf>).

**Press – Venezuelan Embassy in the U.S. September 26, 2010.**

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## Olivia Burlingame Goubri

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**Subject:** FW: Pro-Government Party Wins Majority Amidst High Turnout in Venezuelan Elections

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Goubri [<mailto:ogoubri@venezuela-us.org>]

**Sent:** Monday, September 27, 2010 12:30 PM

**To:** 'ogoubri@venezuela-us.org'

**Subject:** Pro-Government Party Wins Majority Amidst High Turnout in Venezuelan Elections

Dear friends and colleagues,

Please find below the most recent election results from Venezuela.

Best, Olivia

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## **Election Bulletin: Pro-Government Party Wins Majority Amidst High Turnout**

President Hugo Chávez's party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV in Spanish), won the majority of the seats in Venezuela's National Assembly during Sunday's legislative elections, claiming 94 of the 165 available seats.

A multitude of different opposition parties grouped in a coalition won 60 seats. The National Electoral Council (CNE) released the results as soon as the trends of the votes counted were irreversible. The outcomes of a few races are still being determined.

The CNE also confirmed a record turnout of 66.45 percent, the highest in the history of legislative elections in the country. By comparison, less than 40 percent of U.S. voters participated in the 2006 mid-term elections.

As the international press highlighted, the electoral process developed peacefully and in normalcy.

According to analysts, the PSUV emerged tremendously strengthened from this election. President Chavez's party not only won the single biggest proportion of seats in Sunday's election, but also more seats than his former party (MVR) did in the 2000 legislative election. The PSUV also took the majority of seats in 18 of Venezuela's 24 states.

More importantly, though, was the level of participation – over 66 percent of Venezuela's 17.7 million voters cast ballots in the election— and what this reflects in terms of the effectiveness, transparency and consolidation of the country's electoral system.

Additionally, opposition political parties participated in the elections, choosing not to repeat the tactical mistake they made in 2005 when – against the advice of the Organization of American States and Carter Center – they chose to abstain from participating in that year's legislative contest.

Sunday's election was the fifteenth time since 1998 that the Venezuelan people have gone to the polls to cast their ballots. Over 6,400 candidates engaged in vibrant debate for the 165 available seats, and thousands of national and international observers were on hand to witness the electoral process.



For information on Venezuela's legislative elections, please read our Fact Sheet  
(<http://venezuela-us.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/09-17-2010-FS-Elections2.pdf>.)

**Press – Venezuelan Embassy in the U.S. September 27, 2010**

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## Olivia Burlingame Gombri

---

**Subject:** FW: Top Colombian Peace Negotiator Removed from Office

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Gombri [mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 30, 2010 9:56 AM  
**To:** 'Olivia'  
**Subject:** Top Colombian Peace Negotiator Removed from Office

Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you might be interested in the recent developments in Colombia. As violence and intimidation increase against human rights groups like Justicia y Paz, it seems that political persecution against elected officials is being accepted as well. On Monday, Colombia's inspector general removed Senator Piedad Córdoba, the leading peace negotiator and a champion for Afro-Colombian rights, from the Senate. Below you will find an article by WOLA on the topic that I believe provides some good context. Please pass on to any you think would be interested.

Regards, Olivia

[http://wola.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=viewp&id=1169&Itemid=2](http://wola.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=viewp&id=1169&Itemid=2)

### **Criminalizing the Construction of Peace in Colombia[1]**

By Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli, Adam Isacson and Anthony Dest, Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)

On Monday, in what appears to be a blatant political move, Colombia's Inspector General removed long time peace activist Senator Piedad Córdoba, with whom WOLA has worked for years, from office for allegedly aiding the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group. Senator Córdoba is banned from holding public office for eighteen years.

Though she got the third highest vote total among her Liberal Party's 17 senators during March 2010 elections, Senator Córdoba is a controversial figure in Colombia. She has a notoriously undiplomatic manner, speaks fondly of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, and has been an outspoken critic of former President Alvaro Uribe and other figures on Colombia's political right. She is one of the most leftist figures in Colombian political life, and Inspector-General Alejandro Ordóñez is one of the furthest to the right. Nonetheless, the IG's message to Colombians is clear---try to push for a negotiated solution to the conflict and we will ruin you.

While many in Colombia hold conferences and write reports about the pursuit of a politically negotiated peace or a possible deal to free guerrilla hostages, Córdoba has delivered results. In 2007, President Uribe agreed to allow her, along with Venezuelan President Chávez, to serve as government sanctioned facilitators of talks with the FARC to secure the release of Colombian, US and French hostages. Despite Uribe's abrupt removal this role after a few months, their efforts convinced the FARC to liberate hostages Clara Rojas and Consuelo Gonzalez, whom the guerrillas had held in captivity for six torturous years. Since then, Senator Córdoba and a group of concerned prominent citizens, Colombians for Peace, continued to advocate for a politically negotiated solution to the conflict and more releases. The FARC released more hostages due to these efforts.

Perhaps less known are Senator Córdoba's efforts to guarantee truth, justice and reparations to the victims of the Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) paramilitaries extradited to the United States. Currently, the U.S. has in its custody a total of thirty former paramilitaries, including fourteen of the AUC's top leaders that are



being charged solely with drug crimes. These men, however, are also responsible for the worst atrocities in the country's recent history. Their actions include the killing of thousand civilians, human rights defenders, Afro-Colombian, Indigenous and trade union leaders. Prior to their extradition to the U.S. in 2008, were participating in Colombia's justice and peace process where they were beginning to reveal key information as to how, why and with which politicians' consent they committed such atrocities. Much of the truth telling on the part of these men was cut short due to their extradition leaving many victims families unable to heal from the hurt they suffered and not fully enabling the society to know the political, economic and other links that enable these horrific operations to take place.

Teaming up with pro-Uribe Senator Rodrigo Lara, Senator Córdoba established a Senate Commission on the Extradited. The Commission has traveled to the United States several times to guarantee that the former Commanders of the AUC provide information that countless victims' families need to learn the truth behind their relatives' murders, disappearances and displacements. Key information needed for Colombians to reconcile and to guarantee that non-repetition of such atrocious crimes do not take place. For Piedad, who was kidnapped by the AUC in 1999, spent several weeks in exile in Canada, and suffered multiple assassination attempts; this engagement with the AUC's leadership for the sake of Colombian victims can only be described as admirable.

Efforts to discredit Piedad Córdoba's political reputation are not new. She is possibly the political opposition figure who received the most vocal criticism under the Uribe Administration, given her fierce critique of the government's policies. Documents obtained in a 2009 raid on the Colombian presidential intelligence agency (DAS) offices by the Attorney General revealed that a special unit within this agency was seeking to "neutralize and restrict" the activities of human rights groups and any voices critical of the Uribe administration. Known as the DAS-scandal, it came to light that the DAS was systematically and without warrants tapping the phones and emails of Colombia's human rights groups, journalists, Supreme Court magistrates, opposition politicians, Afro-Colombian leaders, and labor groups. Actions often went further, to include what presidential intelligence documents called "political warfare": generating false links between such persons and the illegal armed groups. Senator Piedad Córdoba was among the members of the opposition victimized by the DAS's actions.

While the Inspector General has the authority to fire Piedad Córdoba from her Senate seat, and while all allegations of support for illegal armed groups should be investigated, it certainly appears that this move was motivated by a political vendetta against the Senator. This decision does not only affect Piedad and her movement Colombians for Peace, it also raises huge obstacles for future efforts of brave Colombians willing to fight the often unpopular fight for peace.

It shows a dangerous arbitrariness regarding what constitutes contact with armed groups to achieve peaceful or humanitarian goals, and what constitutes support for that armed group. Where is the line between giving advice to a "terrorist" group that might steer them toward negotiations, and giving advice to a "terrorist" group that someone like the Inspector-General might construe as support for terrorism?

This lack of clarity is a strong disincentive to future "track two" or citizen peacemaking efforts, even those that have explicit government authorization. It sends a very negative message to the countless victims, displaced persons and FARC-held hostages who saw hope in Piedad's message that peace through dialogue is possible. In the words of longtime victims' advocate and Member of Congress Ivan Cepeda, "This is a blow to democracy and an obstacle for the work towards peace in Colombia."

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[1] Gimena Sanchez-Garzoli, Adam Isacson and Anthony Dest, Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)



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## Olivia Burlingame Gombri

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**Subject:** FW: Venezuela's Presidential Envoy for Climate Change to Speak at Green Festival Sun, Oct. 24

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Gombri [<mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 30, 2010 11:38 AM  
**To:** 'Olivia Burlingame Gombri'  
**Subject:** Venezuela's Presidential Envoy for Climate Change to Speak at Green Festival Sun, Oct. 24

Dear friends and colleagues,

On Sunday, October 24th, Venezuela's Presidential Envoy for Climate Change, Claudia Salerno, is scheduled to speak about climate change at the Green Festival in Washington DC. She will be speaking about the upcoming climate negotiations in Cancun and the coalition that has formed between environmental movements and governments of the South (largely members of ALBA) to push for a real alternative to the Copenhagen Accord. You will find more information about her and the panel she will be on with Ambassador Solon of Bolivia below. Please pass on to all you think would be interested. Hope to see you there!

Brief Bio of Claudia Salerno

[http://www.greenfestivals.org/index.php?option=com\\_mtree2&task=viewlink&link\\_id=3284&Itemid=865](http://www.greenfestivals.org/index.php?option=com_mtree2&task=viewlink&link_id=3284&Itemid=865)

Program agenda and panel description (go to p. 14)

[http://www.flipbookserver.com/scripts/showbook.aspx?ID=10003083\\_980460](http://www.flipbookserver.com/scripts/showbook.aspx?ID=10003083_980460)

All the best, Olivia

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## Olivia Burlingame Goumbri

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**Subject:** FW: Open Letter to the Wash Post by Ambassador Alvarez

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**From:** Olivia Burlingame Goumbri [mailto:ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, October 04, 2010 11:16 AM  
**To:** 'Olivia Burlingame Goumbri'  
**Subject:** Open Letter to the Wash Post by Ambassador Alvarez

Dear friends and colleagues,

Please see an open letter to the Washington Post by Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez on its coverage of Venezuela's recent elections below.

Regards, Olivia

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### **Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the U.S.**

#### **Open Letter to the Washington Post**

Once again The Washington Post lashes out at Venezuela and misinforms its readers on the country's reality. In its most recent editorial ("How Chavez Lost the Popular Vote – and Won By a Landslide," October 1), not only does the Post attempt to disregard a clean and transparent electoral process, but it also reaches the extreme of blatantly lying about the results, claiming that the opposition coalition managed to obtain 52 percent of the so-called "popular vote."

First, it is completely disingenuous and manipulative to draw a national vote count from a legislative election whose logic is predominantly based on individual electoral districts. With the exception of votes for the Latin American Parliament (a regional organization), it makes

little sense to speak of a national popular vote in this election. Second, if we insist on adding all the results of the party-line votes published by the National Electoral Council (CNE), it becomes clear that the 10 opposition parties that make up the Table of Unity (MUD) received 47.16 percent of the “national popular vote.” The PSUV alone received 48.19 percent.

Most importantly, the Post’s criticism of Venezuela’s electoral system shows, at the very least, its ignorance about the meaning of participatory democracy. In Venezuela we elect the majority of our representatives to the National Assembly by name, and we respect the participation of minority parties. The fact that Venezuela’s electoral system is different from that of the United States does not entitle the Post to discredit it. Moreover, it is odd that the Post defends the system of proportional representation when that system does not even exist in the United States.

Beyond all of the misleading claims used by the Post to misinform its readers, what is most indignant is the condescension shown to the Venezuelan people and the peaceful and democratic road they have chosen. Venezuelans have exercised their right to vote 15 times since President Chavez was first elected in 1998. There have been regional, legislative and presidential elections, not to mention referenda on the implementation of constitutional reforms and to recall President Chavez himself. (A tool not available in the U.S.) In this most recent election, the Venezuelan people demonstrated their democratic vocation, along with their faith in the transparency of the country’s modern electoral system, in historic numbers – 66 percent of the country’s 17 million registered voters cast ballots on September 26.

Even though the Post has consistently tried to discredit Venezuela’s socialist democracy simply because the Venezuelan people have chosen a sovereign and independent path, the truth is that this election marks the consolidation of the country’s system of participatory democracy. The Post should celebrate the fact that the Venezuelan opposition – after coup attempts and sabotages over the past eleven years – seems to have joined the democratic process. Regardless, when the problem isn’t the reality of Venezuela’s democracy but continuing an aggressive editorial line against the democratic, socialist, independent and sovereign government of President Chavez, then it becomes clear why this editorial was published.

**Bernardo Álvarez Herrera**

**Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the U.S.**

**October 2, 2010**



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## Embajada de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Estados Unidos

Texto aquí

Usted está suscrito a la lista de correos de la Embajada de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela en Washington D.C.



**Our mailing address is:**

Embajada de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela  
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## Olivia Burlingame Gombri

---

**Subject:** FW: Venezuela's Presidential Envoy for Climate Change to Speak at Green Festival! Get your tickets now!

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Gombri [<mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org>]

**Sent:** Friday, October 08, 2010 11:53 AM

**To:** 'ogombri@venezuela-us.org'

**Subject:** Venezuela's Presidential Envoy for Climate Change to Speak at Green Festival! Get your tickets now!

Dear friends,

We are very excited to announce that Venezuela's chief climate negotiator, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change Claudia Salerno, will be speaking at the Green Festival this year on Sunday, Oct. 24, at 2pm with Bolivian Ambassador Pablo Solon. We have a limited amount of tickets and are very happy to have the opportunity to offer them to you at a first come first serve basis. Please find information on reserving your tickets below, and we look forward to seeing you there at this very special event.

Sincerely,  
Olivia

## The Coalition Between Governments of the South and Environmentalists to Stop Climate Change



**Featuring**



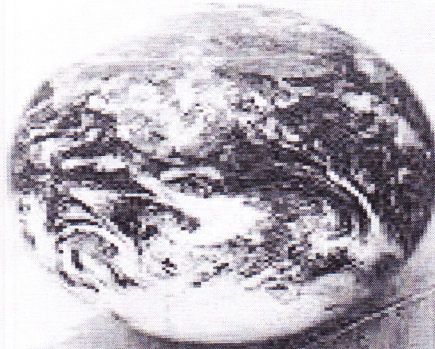
**Claudia Salerno Caldera, Venezuela's  
Special Presidential Envoy for Climate  
Change**



**Pablo Solon, Bolivian Ambassador to**



## **The Coalition Between Governments of the South and Environmentalists to Stop Climate Change**



**Featuring**



**Claudia Salerno Caldera, Venezuela's  
Special Presidential Envoy for  
Climate Change**



**Pablo Solon, Bolivian Ambassador to  
the United Nations**

**Sunday, October 24, 2:00pm-3:00pm, Center Stage  
Green Festival, Washington Convention Center**

801 Mount Vernon Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

**For tickets please RSVP to: [ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org](mailto:ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org)  
Tickets are on a first come first serve basis.**

**For Further information about the Green Festival program visit:  
<http://www.greenfestivals.org/wdc/updates/>**



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## Olivia Burlingame Gombri

---

**Subject:** FW: Venezuela and Climate Change  
**Attachments:** Venezuela and Climate Change.pdf; Flyer Green Festival 2.pdf

**From:** Olivia Burlingame Gombri [mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 12, 2010 1:50 PM  
**To:** 'ogombri@venezuela-us.org'  
**Subject:** Venezuela and Climate Change

Dear friends,

Please find our most recent fact sheet on climate change here: <http://venezuela-us.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/10-08-2010-Venezuela-and-Climate-Change1.pdf> and attached. As you know, Venezuela is both one of the world's main producers of oil and one of its most ecologically diverse countries. While a seeming contradiction, over the last decade Venezuela has strived to protect its natural environment, better use oil resources to promote sustainable development, and work within the international framework to ensure that climate change remains a central topic of discussion requiring concerted efforts from the world's countries. But unlike many of the solutions proposed internationally to address the pressing challenge of climate change, Venezuela has been at the forefront of advocating more dramatic reforms. As Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez stated during the December 2009 Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark: "Change the system, not the climate."

We are also very excited to announce that Venezuela's chief climate negotiator, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate Change Claudia Salerno, will be speaking at the Green Festival this year on Sunday, Oct. 24, at 2pm along with Bolivia's Ambassador Pablo Solon. We have a limited amount of complimentary tickets and are very happy to have the opportunity to offer them to you at a first come first serve basis. You can reserve your tickets by emailing: [ogombri@venezuela-us.org](mailto:ogombri@venezuela-us.org) and we look forward to seeing you there at this very special event! For more information on this event see the attached flyer as well as the Green Festival's website: <http://www.greenfestivals.org/wdc/updates/>

Please feel free to pass this e-mail on to all those you think would be interested.

Best, Olivia

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## Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United States

### VENEZUELA AND CLIMATE CHANGE: CHANGE THE SYSTEM, NOT THE CLIMATE

Venezuela is both one of the world's main producers of oil and one of its most ecologically diverse countries. While a seeming contradiction, over the last decade Venezuela has strived to protect its natural environment, better use oil resources to promote sustainable development, and work within the international framework to ensure that climate change remains a central topic of discussion requiring concerted efforts from the world's countries.

But unlike many of the solutions proposed internationally to address the pressing challenge of climate change, Venezuela has been at the forefront of advocating more dramatic reforms. **As Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez stated during the December 2009 Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark: "Change the system, not the climate."**

#### CLIMATE CHANGE: A SHARED CONCERN

As a country rich in ecological diversity – more than 150,000 plant and animal species can be found in the country – Venezuela is particularly concerned with the long-lasting and irreversible impacts of climate change. A historic drought in 2009 dramatically affected Venezuela's hydro-electric capacity – the country relies on water for over 70 percent of its electricity generation – and highlighted how climate change, if not stopped, can have severe effects throughout the world.

Venezuela recognizes the global scientific consensus that climate change is occurring and that more than 70 percent of it is caused by the concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, 56.6 percent pertaining to the use of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) in the production of energy (25.9 percent), industry (19.4 percent) and transport (13.1 percent).

However, **Venezuela also believes that the increased concentration of greenhouse gases is a consequence of a resource-heavy development model, and not just the cause of climate change.** For Venezuela, the cause or the world's changing climate is closely linked to the current development model that favors the interests of big capital and unchecked growth

at the expense of equitable development and ecological balance.

#### SOCIAL JUSTICE, ECOLOGICAL BALANCE

Shortly after President Chávez took office, a new constitution (1999) was written and publicly endorsed that supports the principles of poverty eradication, environmental protection and people's participation in the country's democracy and development. It also states that sustainable development is the path that the country will adopt in its development plans, stressing the rational use of natural resources in order to ensure the an equilibrium with the natural ecosystem.

Based on these constitutional principles, the concept and practice sustainable development has deepened in Venezuela. For the Bolivarian Revolution, the solution to the environmental crisis is to move from a consumerist, industrial and individualistic society that sacrifices the environment to one that is socially just and ecologically sustainable.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL ADVANCES

Venezuela has taken a number of steps to meet its constitutional obligations of the promotion of sustainable development, but two are particularly worth noting.

**Tree Mission:** The Tree Mission, or *Mission Arbol*, is an ambitious program started in 2006 with the goal of reforestation, sustainable agro-forestry, and the promotion of socio-productive alternatives for the country's rural population, whose agricultural activities can have damaging impacts on the environment. From 2006 to 2008, over 18,000 hectares were cultivated, 65 percent for protective forest cover, 33 percent for agro-forestry, and 2 percent for industrial and commercial purposes. Over 29,000 people benefited – 40 percent of them women – and \$93.3 million was invested.

**Efficient Light Bulbs:** As part of a plan to lower electricity usage, Venezuela is promoting energy efficiency initiatives. Today more than 100 million incandescent light bulbs have been replaced with fluorescent alternatives. The original goal of replacing 52 million bulbs would translate into a 4.8 percent decrease





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in electricity consumption in Venezuela. Also, 806 photovoltaic systems have been installed that are generating energy in schools, clinics, cafeterias and security stations in isolated, frontier and indigenous areas. Currently is being development several projects of wind power generation the will allow to generate 30,000 megawatts.

### CONTRIBUTOR TO CLIMATE REGULATION

Venezuela has 47.7 million hectares covered by a wide variety of forests, representing 5.55 percent of the forests in Latin America and the Caribbean and 1.25 percent of the world.<sup>5</sup> This woodland possesses a significant capacity to absorb more than 30,000 Gigagrams (Gg) of CO<sub>2</sub>, reflecting the significant importance of Venezuelan forests as agents of climate change mitigation. The Area under Special Management System (ABRAE), which covers 67 percent of the national territory, plays an important role in the conservation, sustainable use and management of the land.

In 1999, Venezuela's greenhouse gas emissions accounted for 0.48% of total global emissions in the planet (the country emitted 192,133 Gg of CO<sub>2</sub> and absorbed 14,297 Gg). This reflects the significant advantage that Venezuela takes from out of its water resources as an energy source (over 70% of national total).

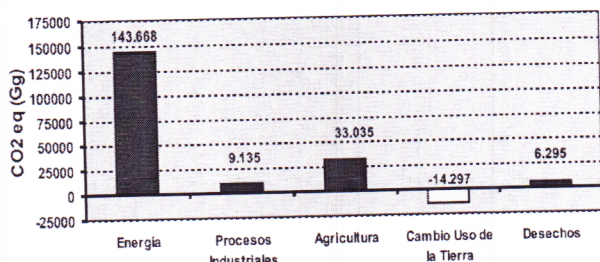


Figure P.2. GEI Emissions and Absorption in Venezuela for the year 1999, expressed in equivalent CO<sub>2</sub>.

### OIL, DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE

Of course, Venezuela remains a vital producer of oil, a status that might seem at odds with its commitment to attacking to roots of climate change. But over the last decade, Venezuela has worked to better use oil rationally

and employ the revenues from its sales for social programs and sustainable development initiatives.

In Venezuela oil is seen as an instrument of peace and integration that enables the achievement of the national strategy of sustainable development, while keeping a rational exploitation of this non-renewable natural resource.

In the time period between the years 2001-2008, Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) contributed \$53 billion to help fund social missions; infrastructure works such as the construction of roads and other transportation networks; sanitation and environmental protection; food sovereignty, health, education, renewable energy, as well as other productive projects that help diversify the economy of the country.

Important initiatives to guarantee access to energy for low-income countries in the region have also been developed, such as Petrocaribe, which serves the countries of the Caribbean.

### THE STRATEGY TO SAVE THE PLANET

Venezuela's strategy to adapt to and mitigate climate change is part of the planned policies to achieve sustainable development in the country, which provide for their adequacy in meeting the major international guidelines, especially Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

These include:

- Promoting environmental legislation to ensure the preservation and protection of natural heritage;
- Increase of forest coverage to enhance national capacity to absorb greenhouse gases;
- Sanitation and control of rivers and watersheds;
- Provision of drinking water to the population;
- Modernization of the "System for Meteorology and Hydrology"
- Increasing energy efficiency and responsible consumption of energy, by promoting clean and renewable energy projects;
- Massive use of gas for vehicles and domestic use;
- Promoting research and environmental education;





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- Promoting community participation;
- Mass Transit Projects: national system of railways and trains;
- Promote food sovereignty as well as surveillance and environmental control.

As an example of the government's commitment and ecological scope, in 2007, Venezuela banned the opening of new coal mines in the state of Zulia. Other mining projects that threaten to disrupt indigenous communities and local ecosystems have been abandoned by the Ministry of Popular Power for the Environment. Among those are decisions made in 2008 to deny the development of gold mining in the Reserve Imataca Forest, one of the largest gold deposits in Latin America.<sup>11</sup> The decision to revoke environmental permits held by the company Gold Reserve Inc. for its project "Las Brisas" and the denial of permission to the company Crystallex, for the exploitation of "Las Cristinas" reservoir, one of the largest gold deposits in Latin America, are illustrative examples of action by the national government.<sup>12</sup>

### INTERNATIONAL ADVOCATE

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In addition to its own national efforts, **Venezuela has signed and ratified over 50 international conventions dealing with environmental protection and sustainable development.** In 1994, Venezuela ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and in 2004 acceded to the Kyoto Protocol. Since then, it has become an active advocate of the most progressive proposals to combat climate change within the international community.

For Venezuela, the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol represent the current binding legal regime that regulates solutions and cooperation in the field, where mitigation and adaptation must be tailored to the plans and national strategies of each country. They also stress that the commitments to reduce emissions in the framework of the convention correspond to the developed countries in respect to their historical responsibilities and the principle of *common but differentiated responsibilities*. Developed countries should fulfill their commitment to share technology and establish appropriate financial mechanisms to make effective the fight against climate

change in poor countries. Venezuela rejects market solutions to address climate change issues.

In the XV Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the UNFCCC in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009, Venezuela, along with the countries of ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance of Our America) avoided legitimizing the summit's agreement promoted by the highly developed countries, and not from the working groups which had been negotiating for over two years.

In Copenhagen, President Chavez reiterated Venezuela's position maintained for the last ten years of negotiation in these meetings: the need for change in the pattern of current production and consumption, for another pattern supportive and friendly to the environment and dignifying to the human being.

### COPENHAGEN, COCHAMBAMBA, CANCUN

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Given the results of the negotiations in Copenhagen, the President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Evo Morales, called on the world's people and policy makers at the Peoples Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of the Mother Earth in Cochabamba, Bolivia in order to contribute to the discussion, as a complementary process to the next round of UN negotiations to be held in Cancun, Mexico in late 2010. Venezuela supported this initiative. In April 2010 at the Cochabamba Summit, more than 30,000 people from 140 countries and 56 governments made their proposals in a participatory manner, in order to address the climate problem. During his participation in the conference, President Chavez proposed that the position of the ALBA in Cancun should be aligned with the resulting conclusions of Cochabamba.

Shortly after the conference, Venezuela, on behalf of the ALBA countries, provided an official report to the UN to be considered for the next round of negotiations in Cancun. In the report, Venezuela as well as the ALBA countries reflect their visions on the matter, stating that developed countries must acknowledge their historic responsibilities as major emitters of greenhouse gasses and encouraging them to make binding commitments of reducing emissions to a level that would bring back the concentrations of greenhouse gases at 300 ppm, and thus limit the increase in global average temperature well below 1.5 ° C.





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Venezuela is committed to achieving a fair and ambitious agreement in Cancun that reflect the will of all parties to the Convention.

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**Press and Communications Office  
October 8, 2010**